

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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New Interactive Map Shows Languages Spoken in America

08 August 2013

Washington — The U.S. Census Bureau released an interactive, online map August 6 pinpointing the wide array of languages spoken in homes across the United States, along with a detailed report on rates of English proficiency and the growing number of speakers of other languages.

The map and the report, *Language Use in the United States: 2011*, were described in a Commerce Department blog post the same day. The U.S. Census Bureau is part of the Commerce Department.

The report shows that Spanish and Chinese are the top non-English languages spoken in the United States, and most of the U.S. population is English-proficient.

"This study provides evidence of the growing role of languages other than English in the national fabric," said Camille Ryan, a statistician in the Census Bureau's Education and Social Stratification Branch and the report's author.

"Yet, at the same time that more people are speaking languages other than English at home, the percentage of people speaking English proficiently has remained steady."

The map, called the "2011 Language Mapper," shows where people speaking specific languages other than English live, with dots representing how many people speak each of 15 different languages. For each language, it shows the concentration of those who say they speak English less than "very well," a measure of English proficiency. The tool uses data collected through the American Community Survey from 2007 to 2011.

The languages available in the interactive map include Spanish, French, French Creole, Italian, Portuguese, German, Russian, Polish, Persian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Tagalog and Arabic. After selecting one of these languages from the menu, users will see a national population density map, with each dot representing about 100 people who speak the language at home placed where these speakers are concentrated.

The map also allows users to zoom in to a smaller geographic area, where each dot represents 10 people. The dots were placed in a random location within census tracts to protect the confidentiality of speakers.

INCREASE IN NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS

The report details the number of people speaking languages other than English at home and their ability to speak English, by selected social and demographic characteristics. It shows that more than half (58 percent)

of U.S. residents 5 and older who speak a language other than English at home also speak English "very well."

The data, taken from the American Community Survey, are provided for the whole country, states and metropolitan and micropolitan areas.

The report shows that the percent speaking English "less than very well" grew from 8.1 percent in 2000 to 8.7 percent in 2007, but stayed at 8.7 percent in 2011. The percent speaking a language other than English at home went from 17.9 percent in 2000 to 19.7 percent in 2007, while continuing upward to 20.8 percent in 2011.

Of the 60.6 million people who spoke a language other than English at home in 2011, almost two-thirds (37.6 million) spoke Spanish.

Reflecting the overall trend, the percentage speaking Spanish at home grew from 12.0 percent in 2005 to 12.9 percent in 2011. In contrast to the overall trend, however, the percent who spoke Spanish at home but spoke English "less than very well" declined from 5.7 percent to 5.6 percent over the period.

The recent increase in non-English speakers continues a trend dating back three decades. Between 1980 and 2010, the number of people speaking a language other than English climbed 158 percent.

The highest percentage jump among 17 of the most common languages was the sevenfold increase in Vietnamese speakers, while Spanish speakers posted the largest numerical gain (25.9 million). In contrast, the number speaking Italian, German, Polish, Yiddish or Greek declined over the period.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT

- In addition to English and Spanish, there were six languages in 2011 spoken at home by at least 1 million people: Chinese (2.9 million), Tagalog (1.6 million), Vietnamese (1.4 million), French (1.3 million), German (1.1 million) and Korean (1.1 million).
- The prevalence of people speaking non-English languages at home varied widely across states, from 44 percent of the population in California to 2 percent in West Virginia.
- Laredo, Texas, led all metro areas, with 92 percent of residents age 5 and older speaking a language other than English at home.
- Metro and micro areas in the West, South and Northeast tended to have higher levels of people speaking non-English languages at home. Those in the Midwest tended to have lower levels, with the exception of Illinois.
- Of Spanish speakers, 45 percent of foreign-born naturalized citizens spoke English "very well," compared with 23 percent of foreign-born noncitizens. Those who

were native-born, had at least a bachelor's degree or were not in poverty were more likely to speak English "very well."

- Eighty percent or more of French and German speakers spoke English "very well." In contrast, less than 50 percent of those who spoke Korean, Chinese or Vietnamese spoke English "very well." The rate for Spanish speakers was 56 percent.

THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

The American Community Survey, which supplied the data, provides a wide range of important statistics about people and housing for every community across the United States. The results are used by everyone from town and city planners to retailers and homebuilders. It is the only source of local estimates for most of the 40 topics it covers, such as education, occupation, language, ancestry and housing costs for even the smallest communities.

Since then-Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson directed the first U.S. census in 1790, the census has collected detailed characteristics about the country's residents. Questions about jobs and the economy were added 20 years later under President James Madison, who said such information would allow the U.S. Congress to "adapt the public measures to the particular circumstances of the community," and over the decades allow America "an opportunity of marking the progress of the society."

The "[2011 Language Mapper](#)" and [Language Use in the United States: 2011](#) (PDF, 1.39MB) are available on the U.S. Census Bureau website.

Education Key to Prosperous Lives

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 08 August 2013

Washington — Data on student learning gathered by aid workers in partner countries is helping the United States develop effective local strategies to teach reading to 100 million children by 2015, says the head of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

"Instead of measuring our success by number of kids in school or the number of teachers we trained, we're measuring the number of children who can read by the time they leave school," USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah told 700 education specialists and development partners August 1, the first day of the two-day USAID Global Education Summit in Washington.

Shah said that with less than 1,000 days until the target date set for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), USAID wants to get the best evidence it can to help it define its approach to education for each partner country. The second of eight MDGs, or MDG2, is to achieve universal education, while MDG3 is to promote gender

equality. The MDGs were agreed to by leaders of 189 heads of government at the United Nations in 2000.

USAID laid out its overall approach to education in a strategy published in 2011 that includes a focus on increased access to education for 15 million learners living in crisis and conflict areas, Shah said.

Based on the strategy, USAID so far has completed reviews of its education programs in Nigeria, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The reviews have helped the agency develop customized strategies for each country, Shah said.

For instance, the education review in the Democratic Republic of the Congo pointed out that one of the greatest barriers to education in the country is school fees. Because the government can't afford to pay teachers, Shah said, parents are expected "to shoulder the burden," which keeps many children out of school every year.

From the review, Shah said, USAID began to work with the government to find a new model, "so primary education becomes a right, not a privilege, for every child."

In another example, Shah noted that USAID staff in South Sudan devised an education plan to reach 500,000 children. "Getting kids, girls in particular, in school quickly is a sign that peace and stability can quickly lead to changes," he said.

Since the overall strategy came out, more than 30 USAID country offices have designed new projects to improve learning, Shah said.

At the summit, Arne Duncan, America's top education official, stressed the value of education to societies. "Education is the new currency by which nations keep competitive and grow," Duncan said.

He noted that every grade of school completed boosts lifetime income 10 percent to 20 percent for girls and 5 percent to 15 percent for boys.

In addition, he said, a mother who can read can better protect her children from chronic illness, and a child born to a literate mother is 50 percent more likely to survive past age 5.

Duncan pointed to technology as an important tool for increasing access to and equity in education. Worldwide, he said, "the fast-evolving field of education technology, from cloud computing to personal learning devices to open education resources ... has a huge potential to transform education."

"A better-educated world is a more prosperous world," Duncan said.

[USAID's education strategy](#) (PDF, 600KB) is available on the agency's website.

Global Climate Survey Shows Warming Evidence

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 08 August 2013

Washington — The year 2012 was among the 10 warmest on record, according to the 2012 *State of the Climate* report, compiled by almost 400 scientists from 52 nations. Based on data collected by scientific instruments monitoring land, sea, ice and atmosphere, the report provides an overview of global climate indicators, notable weather events and other meteorological observations.

U.S. scientists at the National Climatic Data Center (NCDC) were the lead editors of the publication, which was issued by the American Meteorological Society. The NCDC reports that dozens of government, academic and private agencies worldwide contributed to the conclusions, providing insights on regional trends sometimes not captured in data alone.

The 2012 trends consistently show a changing, varying climate.

"Carbon levels are climbing, sea levels are rising, Arctic sea ice is melting, and our planet as a whole is becoming a warmer place," said Kathryn D. Sullivan, who is acting administrator at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the parent agency of the NCDC.

Now in its 23rd year, the *State of the Climate* report is offered to public officials as a tool to help them make decisions about their communities. The data provide information for tackling a range of planning considerations: Is the sea level rising into our city? Is it safe to build on that shoreline? How should we prepare for more violent storms?

Besides warming trends, Sullivan said, the report shows that extreme weather events — monsoons and floods, for instance — are "more frequent and more intense than what we have accounted for in the past, what we have presumed in our business plans, our communities, our infrastructure."

Jessica Blunden, a scientist involved in climate monitoring at the NCDC, pointed out three of the "striking findings" in the report:

- Global average ocean temperature was higher in 2012 than the averages for the 1980s to 2010.
- Heat content — heat stored in the ocean — in the upper 700 meters of the ocean remained near record-high values in 2012.
- Average global sea level reached a record high in 2012 and has been on a steady rise since 1993.

Blunden also pointed out that the ocean's heat storage is climbing in the deep ocean, "even down to levels a mile [1.6 kilometers] below the ocean's surface."

During an August 6 briefing, a research civil engineer said some of "the most compelling evidence of the fact that the global temperatures are warming" emerges from the data collected in the Arctic. Jackie Richter-Menge, a research specialist in cold regions at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, said a record low snow cover in Eurasia was noted in 2012. Similar warming trends created record findings in North America, she said.

"Where sea ice cover is declining at a rate of 13 percent a decade, snow cover extent in June is declining at a rate of about 17 percent a decade," Richter-Menge said.

Observations of the summertime melting season in the planet's northernmost regions also affirm planetary warming trends. Richter-Menge said satellite observations show one "rare melt event" involving 97 percent of the ice sheet.

"Across the Greenland ice sheet, the ice sheet was relatively dark," Richter-Menge said. "This relatively dark ice sheet can absorb more sunlight, which can promote more melting."

In contrast, the Antarctic ice sheet reached a record high in 2012. The ice mass in the planet's southernmost region is 0.5 percent higher than ever before recorded. U.S. government scientists briefing journalists on the findings said it is beyond the scope of their work to speculate on why that might be happening.

The *State of the Climate* report shows that greenhouse gases rose again after a slight decline in 2011, presumably caused by the global economic downturn.

White House's Rhodes on Imports from Burma

07 August 2013

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
August 7, 2013

Statement by Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes on the Expiration of the Ban on Imports from Burma

Today, in light of the July 28 expiration of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act's (BFDA) ban on imports from Burma, the President issued an Executive Order that repeals the provisions of Executive Order 13310 that implemented the broad BFDA import ban on products of Burma.

President Obama fully supported the expiration of the broader ban on imports from Burma and is taking this step to advance our policy of promoting responsible economic engagement and encouraging reform that directly benefits the Burmese people. The removal of the broad ban on imports of articles other than jadeite and rubies, and articles of jewelry containing them, represents

the next step in the Administration's continued efforts to promote responsible trade and investment in support of Burma's reform process. However, due to continuing concerns, including with respect to labor and human rights in specific sectors, this Executive Order reinstates the prohibitions and restrictions on the importation into the United States of jadeite and rubies mined or extracted from Burma, and on articles of jewelry containing them, that was originally imposed by the Tom Lantos Block Burmese JADE (Junta's Anti-Democratic Efforts) Act of 2008, which amended the BFDA. The Administration is maintaining restrictions on specific activities and actors that contribute to human rights abuses or undermine Burma's democratic reform process.

Today's announcement continues to broaden American engagement in Burma, including increased opportunities for trade and investment, development assistance to strengthen the capacity of the government and people to promote growth and opportunity, and principled support for political reform and national reconciliation. Americans will continue to stand with the government and people of Burma as they continue their democratic transition, and work to realize the full promise of their extraordinary country.

President Obama's Greetings on Eid al-Fitr

07 August 2013

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
August 7, 2013

Statement by the President on the Occasion of Eid al-Fitr

Michelle and I send our warmest greetings to Muslims celebrating Eid al-Fitr here in the United States and around the world. During the past month, Muslims have honored their faith through prayer and service, fasting and time spent with loved ones. At this year's White House Iftar, I was proud to spend time with some of the many American Muslims whose contributions enrich our democracy and strengthen our economy. Many of us have had the opportunity to breakfast with our Muslim friends and colleagues—a tradition that reminds us to be grateful for our blessings and to show compassion to the less fortunate among us, including millions of Syrians who spent Ramadan displaced from their homes, their families, and their loved ones. To help the many Syrians in need this Eid al-Fitr, the United States is providing an additional \$195 million in food aid and other humanitarian aid, bringing our humanitarian contribution to the Syrian people to over \$1 billion since the crisis began. For millions of Americans, Eid is part of a great tapestry of America's many traditions, and I wish all Muslims a blessed and joyful celebration. Eid Mubarak.

U.S. Seeks Expanded Partnerships with Faith-Based Communities

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 07 August 2013

Washington — Faith-based communities will have a greater voice in the U.S. foreign policy process, thanks to the State Department's new Office of Faith-Based Community Initiatives.

At an August 7 event announcing the new office, Secretary of State John Kerry said the mission of the office will be "to engage more closely with faith communities around the world with the belief that we need to partner with them to solve global challenges."

"We need to recognize," Kerry said, "that in a world where people of all faiths are migrating and mingling like never before, where we are this global community which we always talk about, we ignore the global impact of religion, in my judgment, at our peril."

Recognizing that in some instances religion has been "hijacked" by people who interpret faith in ways that lead to conflict, Kerry said the Office of Faith-Based Community Initiatives will "grow our ability to be able to reach out to more communities and to create greater understanding between peoples and countries."

There is "common ground" between the Abrahamic faiths, Kerry said, "and all religions and philosophies, whether you're talking about Hindu or Confucianism or any other of the many of the world's different approaches to our existence here on the planet and to our relationship with a supreme being."

The Office of Faith-Based Community Initiatives will be directed by Shaun Casey, an activist and scholar on religion and politics, who is taking a leave of absence from the Wesley Theological Seminary where he is a professor of Christian ethics. Based in Washington, Wesley Theological Seminary advances theological scholarship among more than 1,000 students each year. The students represent more than 30 denominations, and graduates go on to ministries across the United States as well as in 20 countries.

At the August 7 event, Casey said his office will be collaborating closely with State Department Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Suzan Johnson Cook, Special Envoy to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Rashad Hussain, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism Ira Forman and Special Representative to Muslim Communities Farah Pandith, as well as Melissa Rogers, director of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

The intent of the new State Department office, Casey said, "is not to design and create a new silo that addresses religion in an isolated manner; rather we are seeking to

multiply the engagement with religion that already exists across the bureaus and offices of this great organization.”

“We seek to be accessible and transparent in our engagements,” Casey said. “This means, among other things, that we have much to learn from our partners across the globe. Our engagement has to be a two-way or sometimes multiway dialogue that builds trust so that we can build — make progress towards our mutual goals.”

In her remarks, Rogers said the Office of Faith-Based Community Initiatives will have three critical objectives: promoting sustainable development and a more effective humanitarian response; advancing pluralism and human rights, including the protection of religious freedom; and preventing, mitigating and resolving violent conflict to enhance local and regional stability and security.

Kerry, Casey and Rogers all emphasized that the increased efforts of the Obama administration to engage with faith-based communities in no way breaches the U.S. Constitution’s separation between church and state.

“A guiding principle for all this work,” Rogers said, “will be that our actions must be consistent with the United States Constitution. Employees of our government can and should engage faith-based leaders and communities on U.S. policy priorities, just as they do other civil society leaders and communities.

“At the same time, our precious religious freedom guarantees of the First Amendment mean that we must observe some special rules when we engage religious actors and matters, such as ensuring governmental neutrality toward faith. All diplomatic and consular posts will receive guidance and continuing assistance on these important issues.”

Learn more about the [State Department Office of International Religious Freedom](#) and the [White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships](#).

Secretary Kerry on Anniversary of Founding of ASEAN

06 August 2013

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesperson
August 6, 2013

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY KERRY

Marking the Anniversary of the Founding of ASEAN

On behalf of President Obama and the people of the United States, we join the 600 million people of the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) - Brunei Darussalam, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Republic of the Union

of Myanmar, the Republic of the Philippines, the Republic of Singapore, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam - in marking the 46th anniversary of the founding of ASEAN.

ASEAN plays a critical and growing role in Asia through promoting regional integration and maintaining regional security. As the central regional organization in Asia, ASEAN is the keystone for Asia’s multilateral architecture, including the ASEAN Regional Forum and the East Asia Summit.

The United States is deeply committed to supporting and partnering with ASEAN. The United States was the first dialogue partner nation to establish a dedicated mission to ASEAN. Our engagement with ASEAN has led to collaboration on everything from maritime security to investing in sustainable energy resources to development in the Lower Mekong sub-region.

I was privileged to participate in my first ASEAN-U.S. Ministerial meeting just last month in Brunei to advance our cooperation on this wide range of shared interests, and I look forward to deepening and broadening our cooperation in the coming years. And I know that President Obama looks forward to participating in the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN-U.S. Summit in Brunei in October.

As we celebrate the anniversary of the founding of ASEAN, know that the United States stands with you as a steadfast partner.

NASA Marks First Anniversary of Curiosity's Mars Landing

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 06 August 2013

Washington — One year since landing on Mars, the rover Curiosity and the Mars Science Laboratory (MSL) on board have answered the big question the craft was sent there to investigate: Have Martian environmental conditions ever been conducive to life? Yes, is Curiosity’s answer. What is now a dry, cold planet was once a warm and wet place, with water probably pure enough to drink.

NASA and partnering scientific organizations celebrated the anniversary of the historic August 6 landing of the spacecraft, looking back on the exuberant moments of the touchdown in mission control, the engineering achievements that made it happen, and the astonishing science that the craft is conducting and will continue to pursue in the future.

Curiosity, the size of a car, carries a camera array able to provide close-up views of the surface, which allowed scientists to make the conclusions about the past environment. MSL captured photos of what looks like a dry streambed, similar to those on Earth, with geologic features revealing what NASA calls “a vigorous ancient stream flow.” For the first time, scientists had a close-up

view of pebble deposits on Mars, as if rushing water had just dropped them.

"We now know Mars offered favorable conditions for microbial life billions of years ago," said the mission's project scientist, John Grotzinger of the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena. "It has been gratifying to succeed, but that has also whetted our appetites to learn more."

The rover is now making its way to the base of Mount Sharp, a carefully chosen landing target. Observations made by earlier orbital craft have shown that the mountain has exposed geological layers, including ones originating in a wet environment, Grotzinger said. "We hope those enticing layers at Mount Sharp will preserve a broad diversity of other environmental conditions that could have affected habitability."

Ken Edgett, a principal scientific investigator of the mission, had his first view of Mount Sharp in photographs taken from hundreds of kilometers above the surface more than a decade ago. He was involved in identifying the mountain as a primary scientific target of Curiosity's mission.

"Every layer is a page in a history book," Edgett said. He was one of the mission scientists and engineers discussing Curiosity's first year on NASA TV programming August 6. "We can go there and see: Not only are there habitable environments recorded in there, but how do environments change over time?"

Curiosity will reach Mount Sharp soon and begin photographing and sampling the layers that provide different data on successive periods in planetary history.

All the data, photos and information Curiosity has already provided — and the discoveries still to come — form the foundation of expanded planetary exploration of the future. "Successes of our Curiosity — that dramatic touchdown a year ago and the science findings since then — advance us toward further exploration, including sending humans to an asteroid and Mars," said NASA Administrator Charles Bolden. "Wheel tracks now will lead to boot prints later."

Curiosity has provided more than 190 gigabits of data; returned more than 36,700 full images and 35,000 thumbnail images; fired more than 75,000 laser shots to investigate the composition of targeted planetary features; and driven about 1.6 kilometers.

The Curiosity team at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, where the mission is managed, is anticipating the rover will be transmitting data and photos back to eager scientists for years to come. Meantime, another Mars mission is preparing for launch. The Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution (MAVEN) spacecraft is being tested and tweaked for November liftoff.

MAVEN will be dedicated to surveying the upper atmosphere of Mars, the first ever mission to do so. The climate changes that have occurred on the planet are thought to be caused in part by the loss of atmospheric gas, blown away by the solar wind. MAVEN is expected to collect data allowing scientists to better understand the processes at work.

Scientists from all over the world have been studying the data returned by Curiosity. National space agencies from Canada, Russia and Spain provided key operational systems of the spacecraft or MSL and continue to be involved in their operation.

Obama Upbeat About Yemen's Future Under President Hadi

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 02 August 2013

Washington — President Obama congratulated Yemen's president, Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi, on the "strong start" he has made on national dialogue in a country that has suffered from several years of violent social upheaval and threats from terrorist groups.

"President Hadi," Obama said during an August 1 press briefing after he met with Hadi at the White House, "obviously faces enormous challenges, but because of his leadership, he's been able to initiate a national dialogue that could potentially bring the parties all together in Yemen and produce a constitution and a transition to a fully democratic government that can serve the interest of the people."

Speaking through an interpreter, Hadi, who took office in 2012, responded: "We look forward to building a new constitution seeking good governance, [and] partnership of all members of the society in the country." He added that he hopes to achieve security and democracy in Yemen and build "a new future for the country, justice, and the division of authority and wealth."

Obama said the United States recognizes the "significant economic challenges" facing Yemen, and he reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to work with the international community to support Yemen's efforts to adopt economic reforms that can produce jobs, growth and prosperity for the Yemeni people. To this end, the United States government committed an all-time high of \$356 million in aid to Yemen in fiscal year 2012, according to a fact sheet released by the U.S. Department of State earlier in 2013.

Obama also thanked Hadi and his government for the strong cooperation that they've offered in fighting terrorism.

"Because of some of the effective military reforms that President Hadi initiated when he came into this office, what we've seen is al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP, move back out of territories that it was controlling," Obama said. "And President Hadi

recognizes that these threats are not only transnational in nature, but also cause severe hardship and prevent the kind of prosperity for the people of Yemen themselves."

Hadi, in his remarks, acknowledged that terrorism had hurt Yemen's tourist industry and driven out oil companies. "So our cooperation against those terrorist elements is actually serving the interests of Yemen," he said.

According to the State Department, to sustain Yemen's ongoing security sector reform and counterterrorism efforts, the United States has provided roughly \$46 million in Department of State-funded security assistance to Yemen in fiscal year 2012, as well as \$112 million in Department of Defense-funded programs to train and equip the Yemeni security forces to conduct counterterrorism operations.

U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to enhancing bilateral defense cooperation with Yemen when he met with Hadi at the Pentagon on July 30. Hagel also lauded the "positive reorganization of Yemen's military forces," according to a Department of Defense news release.

U.S. Works for Safe Water Access, Sanitation for Millions

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 02 August 2013

Washington — The U.S. government devoted almost \$960 million to assistance for improved access to drinkable water, sanitation and hygiene in developing countries in 2012, according to a report presented to lawmakers August 1.

Almost 2.8 million people gained access to clean water last year, while close to 900,000 experienced improved access to sanitation facilities, according to an annual report the U.S. State Department completed in July. U.S. assistance for improving water and sanitation access is managed under the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act of 2005, which requires an annual report to Congress about the year's activities and accomplishments.

At an August 1 hearing, a House of Representatives Foreign Affairs subcommittee reviewed the government's international assistance programs in water, sanitation and hygiene, collectively known as WASH in the international development community.

Representative Ami Bera of California, a physician turned politician, said developing countries have no greater need than clean water because good nutrition and good health both depend on it. Improved access to clean water is "an effective way of saving human life, and it is also an important thing we can do to relieve human suffering," Bera said.

The World Health Organization (WHO) calls waterborne

diseases the world's greatest killer, estimating they cause 2.2 million deaths each year, more than half of them children. Worldwide, around 1.1 billion people lack access to improved water sources and 2.4 billion have no basic sanitation, WHO says.

Some of the expanded water services cited in the State Department report include:

- Almost 264,000 Indonesians and 155,000 Kenyans saw safe water start flowing in their communities.
- Improved sanitation facilities became available to about 20,000 Indonesians and 113,000 Kenyans.
- More than 1.7 million people in Jordan received improved water service with construction of pumping stations and water conveyance systems funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).
- USAID-supported projects in Malawi trained 42,000 people — half of them women — in watershed management tools that conserve soil and water.

Aaron Salzberg, special coordinator for water resources at the U.S. State Department, told the subcommittee that improving WASH resources is especially important for women because of their disproportionate share of hardships due to poor water access. "It is estimated that across sub-Saharan Africa, women spend some 40 billion hours a year collecting water," an activity that can consume as much as five hours a day. The daily chore also comes with safety hazards as women and children walk through isolated areas where they are vulnerable to accident and attack.

The Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act has achieved important gains in expanding access to clean water and sanitation services, but USAID Global Water Coordinator Christian Holmes told the subcommittee that achieving sustainability of those services is the more difficult part of the problem.

Providing improved water, sanitation and hygiene to 10,000 people, for example, is achievable, he said. "It's another thing to try to figure out what happened to those 10,000 people over a 15-year period," Holmes said. "That takes time, and it takes resources."

U.S. international development efforts have placed a priority on water and sanitation improvements for decades, but the issue took on new urgency in 2012 with the release of the Global Water Security report, prepared by the U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence. Without more effective water management measures, the report found, "many countries important to the United States" are expected to face water shortages severe enough to threaten national security by 2040.

In view of the findings, then-Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton ordered development of a more strategic

U.S. response to water challenges facing the developing world.

"The overall goal of U.S. efforts on international water issues is to help countries achieve water security," Salzberg said.

The U.S. strategy brings not only financial resources to bear on the problem, but also the wide-ranging technical, engineering and scientific experience of federal, state and local agencies.

"What we hear most often from countries is not 'give us your money,' but 'show us how you solved your problems,'" Salzberg said. "Not a month goes by where we don't have at least one, two and sometimes three groups from around the world coming to the United States to learn from our examples [of water resource use and development] — both good and bad."

Salzberg said the State Department is also using diplomatic efforts to inspire greater political commitment on the local level to increase planning and financial commitment to water and sanitation infrastructure.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov>)